

## Agency Blogs

Attached are some interesting items of information gleaned from a quick scan of the internet concerning blogs. This information provides general background information on blogs and some insights concerning transportation agency use of blogs.

The summary of findings is followed by a list of the referenced sources and copies of some of the sources themselves.

### Summary

- Google Blog definition: “A frequent chronological publication of personal thoughts and Web links”
- AMA describes blogging as “crowds talking to crowds” and “multiple messy conversations”
- Merriam-Webster named “blog” the word of the year in 2004. Their definition is:
  - “a Web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments and hyperlinks.”
- Some general elements of a blog entry:
  - Permalink – link identifying a specific blog entry, usually a date – link can be used in an email or newsletter to provide a click-through to the blog entry
  - Comments – readers click on to add a response to blog
  - Trackback – blog reader does not directly comment, but leaves a link to a comment contained on his/her site
  - Blogrolls – lists of other blogs on same topic
- The Blogosphere: 40,000 new blogs appear each day
- One blog tracking service covers 27.8 million sites with 2 billion links and 29,100 blog updates per hour
- About 11%, or about 50 million, of internet users are regular blog readers
- 27% of adults in the US who go online read blogs
- 28% of journalists rely on blogs for reporting and research: 53% gleaned story ideas from the blogs and 36% used blogs to locate sources
- Transit agencies have web sites, but agency blogs are hard to find or don’t exist

- Transit customer sites are more accessible. Some tend to be bulletin board type sites rather than the more fluid blogs referred to above. The transit customer sites range from the pleasant and informative to the somewhat angry. These include:
  - Philadelphia-Area Getting There Journal
  - BART Musings
  - Transit Toronto
  - Bad Transit – Boston MBTA
  - BART Rage
- Many organizations are evaluating adding blogging to their business strategies. Top executives at some big companies ( Disney, Sun Microsystems, GM and Jupitermedia) are blogging
- If an organizational program is established to encourage employees to blog about an agency, then some guidelines should be established. Note that employees blog as individuals. The program could be internal and/or external.

## **Attachments**

1. Blog definition – What constitutes a blog from Google.
2. Google Public Transit Site – Google’s blog about setting up a transit trip planner for METRA
3. Technorati website – A self proclaimed authority on what is going on in the world of blogs.
4. Blog entry Vermont Non-Profit CommuNT: Blogs vs. Websites
5. Corporate Blogging Made Simple (Page 1) – An AMA article on corporate blogging.
6. Corporate Blogging Guidelines – Sample of guidelines created for a private company.

### **Attachment 1**

#### **blog**

##### **Definition**

*blog*

A frequent, chronological publication of personal thoughts and Web links.

##### **Information**

A blog is often a mixture of what is happening in a person's life and what is happening on the Web, a kind of hybrid diary/guide site, although there are as many unique types of blogs as there are people.

People maintained blogs long before the term was coined, but the trend gained momentum with the introduction of automated published systems, most notably Blogger at [blogger.com](http://blogger.com). Thousands of people use services such as Blogger to simplify and accelerate the publishing process.

*Blogs* are alternatively called *web logs* or *weblogs*. However, "blog" seems less likely to cause confusion, as "web log" can also mean a server's log files.

## **Attachment 2**

Googler insights into product and technology news and our culture.

### **Public transit via Google**

12/07/2005 09:04:00 PM

Posted by Avichal Garg, Product Manager, Transit Team

One of the best things about working at Google is a policy known as "20 percent time," which you can read about on our [jobs page](#) or in [this post](#). Having the freedom to pursue projects during 20 percent of our work week means engineers can pursue a breadth of unique and interesting ideas without having to wait for anyone else.

So not too long ago, a few engineers from San Francisco, New York, and Zurich -- all of whom regularly use public transportation -- decided that being able to plan local trips without having to go to multiple websites, and done in an easy, intuitive way would be a useful product. So they devoted their 20 percent time to building it. As it happens, a lot of people thought this was a great idea, and our small team quickly grew with "twenty-percenters" from across Google.

Today, we are happy and proud to tell you that their efforts have resulted in a new [Google Labs](#) experiment: [Google Transit Trip Planner](#). With it, commuters will be able to easily access public transit schedules, routes, and plan trips using their local public transportation options. This first release covers only the Portland, Oregon metro area, but we are working to expand our coverage very soon. (If you're from a local transit agency interested in being included in Google Transit, we would love to speak with you. [Just write to us.](#))

We chose to launch with the Portland metro area for a couple of reasons. TriMet, Portland's transit authority, is a technological leader in public transportation. The team at TriMet is a group of tremendously passionate people dedicated to serving their community. And TriMet has a wealth of data readily available that they were eager to

share with us for this project. This combination of great people and great data made TriMet the ideal partner.

Public transportation offers a unique type of data that people use in very different ways than most of the data Google has worked with before. We really want to understand how people use Google Transit and the challenges we'll face as we cover additional cities. To that end, we'd love to [hear your feedback!](#)

Try some of the queries you can do in Portland on Google Transit:

### **Attachment 3**

## **About Technorati**

Currently tracking 27.8 million sites and 2 billion links.

Technorati is the authority on what's going on in the world of weblogs.

What is a weblog? A weblog, or blog, is a personal journal on the web. Weblogs express as many different subjects and opinions as there are people writing them. Some blogs are highly influential and have enormous readership while others are primarily intended for a close circle of family and friends.

The power of weblogs is that they allow millions of people to easily publish their ideas, and millions more to comment on them. Blogs are a fluid, dynamic medium, more akin to a 'conversation' than to a library — which is how the Web has often been described in the past. With an increasing number of people reading, writing, and commenting on blogs, the way we use the Web is shifting in a fundamental way. Instead of being passive consumers of information, more and more Internet users are becoming active participants. Weblogs let everyone have a voice.

Technorati is a real-time search engine that keeps track of what is going on in the blogosphere — the world of weblogs.

A few years ago, Web search was revolutionized by a simple but profound idea — that the relevance of a site can be determined by the number of other sites that link to it, and thus consider it 'important.' In the world of blogs, hyperlinks are even more significant, since bloggers frequently link to and comment on other blogs, which creates the sense of timeliness and connectedness one would have in a conversation. So Technorati tracks the number of links, and the perceived relevance of blogs, as well as the real-time nature of blogging. Because Technorati automatically receives notification from weblogs as soon as they are updated, it can track the thousands of updates per hour that occur in the blogosphere, and monitor the communities (who's linking to whom) underlying these conversations.

The [Pew Internet study](#) estimates that about 11%, or about 50 million, of Internet users are regular blog readers. According to Technorati data, there are about 70,000 new blogs a day. Bloggers — people who write weblogs — update their weblogs regularly; there are about 700,000 posts daily, or about 29,100 blog updates an hour.

Technorati displays what's important in the blogosphere — which bloggers are commanding attention, what ideas are rising in prominence, and the speed at which these conversations are taking place. Technorati makes it possible for you to find out what people on the Internet are saying about you, your company, your products, your competitors, your politics, or other areas of interest — all in real-time. All this activity is monitored and indexed within minutes of posting. Technorati provides a live view of the global conversation of the web.

## Technorati Media Contact

Derek Gordon

415-896-3005

[press@technorati.com](mailto:press@technorati.com)

## Attachment 4

Blog Entry Vermont Non-Profit CommuT: Blogs Vs. Website

[Blog v Web Reve](#) This conversation goes into much more detail both about:

- \* the technical advantages of blogging platforms
- \* the strategic advantages - don't skip Marnie Webb's comments: [blogs may be obsolete but blogging isn't](#).
- \* the general pros and cons.

The main point that I would add 9after reading this is that it's not just an apples/oranges decision, and it's not just about which is easier to manage. It's about which web you want to invest in:

- \* the current brochureware web, which gives you a static place to refer people to for information about your organization; or
- \* the social web, the thing the web is becoming, which has built in feedback loops and a referral system that can dramatically build awareness for your cause.

Another theme here is that you can't be put off by the hype about blogs. It's not about blogs - it's about the communications platform. This is Marnie's main point, and I don't want anyone to miss it. This is what is completely relevant to social organizations, and the main reason why the idea of subbing a blog for a professional web site is so powerful. Blogs are not, contrary to popular definition, personal online journals. they are nodes in a gigantic network, and the quality nodes bubble into the public consciousness with a free, natural publicity system. Commercial advertising isn't allowed here - the value system that generates exposure is based on content.

We (non-profits) have great content. So, the simple metaphor - if our message were an automobile, why would we park it in the driveway rather than take it out on the highway?

*posted by Peter Campbell on [06.09.05](#) @ 10:25 am |*

## Attachment 5

### Corporate Blogging Made Simple

By Janet Johnson

#### 1. Corporate Blogging Made Simple

Blogs have received quite a bit of attention recently, particularly for their ability to engage audiences (such as customers, partners, employees and other key constituents) with a more personal style of communicating. As such, many organizations are now wondering whether they should be incorporating blogging into their business initiatives and some companies – and high profile business executives – have already gotten started. Boeing vice president, [Randy Baseler](#); Sun Microsystems president [Jonathan Schwartz](#); the vice president of engineering at Disney's ABC Cable Networks Group, [Michael Pusateri](#); [Bob Lutz](#), GM vice chairman, [Tim O'Reilly](#), president of O'Reilly and Associates, a book publishing company; [Mark Cuban](#), owner of the Dallas Mavericks; and [Alan Meckler](#), CEO of Jupitermedia Corp. are among those who have already embraced blogging.

Indeed, blogs are becoming so pervasive that a recent survey by the Pew Internet and American Life Project revealed that 27 percent of adults who go online in the United States read blogs. That same survey showed that 40,000 new blogs appear each day. If only 0.01 percent of those are relevant to your business, that means there are 40 new blogs popping up **each day** that could be covering your market trends, talking about you and your competitors, and/or engaging existing or potential customers.

In addition, more than 28% of journalists now rely on blogs for reporting and research, according to a survey by EURO RSCG Magnet and Columbia University, with 53% of surveyed journalists revealing they gleaned story ideas from blogs and 36% saying they used blogs to locate sources. The study concluded that because of their appeal to and readership among journalists, blogs have "enormous potential" as a media relations tool.

Perhaps this is why a recent [HP Small Business Survey](#) showed that 10 percent of small businesses already include blogs in their marketing activities and why another 81 percent plan to spend more money on technology for Web sites, blogs, and online services in the next two to three years.

Interested in learning how to start a corporate blog of your very own? Then this best practices paper is definitely worth reading.

## **Attachment 6**

**Sunday, March 27, 2005**

### **Corporate Blogging Guidelines, Draft #2**

About a week ago, I posted an initial draft of what we were then calling our [Corporate Blogging Rules](#). I asked for public comment and received some terrific input. Many readers were put off by the formality and legalese of the document. They felt it should be more conversational and less intimidating—after all, we are trying to promote blogging within our company not stifle it.

Other readers pointed out where the document was inconsistent or unclear. Some even noted items that we had neglected to address, like who owns the content.

So, I met on Thursday with Gabe Wicks, Vice President of our Design and Multimedia Group and the unofficial chairman of our Blogging Oversight Committee, and Frank Wentworth, our General Counsel. We talked through all the comments and then discussed how we wanted to revise the initial draft.

What follows below is the fruit of our labor. Once again it is offered as a public discussion draft. We may have now erred on the site of being too liberal and too informal, but I am hopeful that this will serve the goal of encouraging blogging within our company and also provide some direction to those who do.

#### **Thomas Nelson Blogging Guidelines**

At Thomas Nelson, we want to encourage you to blog about our company, our products, and your work. Our goal is three-fold:

- To raise the visibility of our company,

- To make a contribution to our industry, and
- To give the public a look at what goes on within a real live publishing company.

Therefore, we have established a “blog aggregator page” that is linked to the [ThomasNelson.com](http://ThomasNelson.com) Web site. “House Work,” the name of this page, contains links to employee blogs, along with the first few sentences from the most recent entry. The page is automatically updated whenever a blogger creates a new post. This way readers can quickly scan new entries, click on those that interest them, and then read the entry on the blogger’s site. This makes it convenient for people who are interested in reading employee blogs. It also helps publicize individual blogs and generates traffic for everyone.

In order to give some direction to employees who wish to blog, we have established a “Blog Oversight Committee” or “BOC.” This is a group of fellow-employee bloggers who are committed to promoting blogging within our company and making sure that the Company’s interests are served.

If you would like to have us link to your blog, you must submit it to the BOC. Before doing so, you should design your blog and write at least one entry. Once you have done this, send an e-mail to Gave Wicks with a link to your blog. The BOC will then review your blog and notify you whether or not it meets the criteria.

In order to participate in this program, you must abide by the following guidelines. (Please keep in mind that review by the BOC and participation in this program does not absolve you of responsibility for everything you post.)

1. **Start with a blogging service.** We do not host employee blogs. We think it adds more credibility if the Company does not officially sponsor them. Therefore, please use one of the many third-party blog hosting sites on the Internet. Some of these are free, such as [Blogger.com](http://Blogger.com), [LiveJournal.com](http://LiveJournal.com), [Blog-City.com](http://Blog-City.com), [Xanga.com](http://Xanga.com), and [MSN Spaces](http://MSN Spaces). Others charge a nominal fee. Examples include [TypePad.com](http://TypePad.com), [SquareSpace.com](http://SquareSpace.com), [BlogIdentity.com](http://BlogIdentity.com), and [Bubbler.com](http://Bubbler.com). If you use one of the latter, any expense is your responsibility.
2. **Write as yourself.** In other words, please use your real name. We don’t want people writing anonymously or under a pseudonym. Your name should be prominently displayed on your blog’s title or subtitle. This will add credibility with your readers and promote accountability within our company.
3. **Own your content.** Employee blog sites are not Company communications. Therefore, your blog entries legally belong to you. They represent your thoughts and opinions. We think it is important that you remind your readers of this fact by including the following disclaimer on your site: “The posts on this blog are provided ‘as is’ with no warranties and confer no rights. The opinions expressed on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent those of my employer.” You assume full responsibility and liability for all actions arising from your posts. We also encourage you to put a copyright notice on your site in your name (e.g., “© 2005, John Smith”).



4. **Write relevant. Write often.** Whether you know it or not, you are an expert. You have a unique perspective on our company based on your talents, skills, and current responsibilities. People want to hear about that perspective. Also, in order to develop a consistent readership, you should try to write on a regular basis. For some, this will be daily; for others, it may be weekly. The important thing is consistent posting. New content is what keeps readers coming back. You may also write on company time, provided it doesn't become excessive and doesn't interfere with your job assignments and responsibilities.
5. **Advertise—if you wish.** While there is no requirement to run ads on your blog, you are free to do this if you wish. Some of the free blog services run ads as a way to offset their costs. If you use such a service, you won't have a choice. On the other hand, if you pay for your service, you can avoid advertising altogether or participate in a service like [Google's AdSense](#) or [Amazon's Associate Program](#). These types of programs will pay you based on "page views," "click-throughs," or purchases made on participating Web sites. You might want to ask the BOC or fellow bloggers for suggestions. The only thing we ask is that, to the extent you have control, you run ads or recommend products that are congruent with our core values as a Company.
6. **Be nice.** Avoid attacking other individuals or companies. This includes fellow employees, authors, customers, vendors, competitors, or shareholders. You are welcome to disagree with the Company's leaders, provided your tone is respectful. If in doubt, we suggest that you "sleep on it" and then submit your entry to the BOC before posting it on your blog.
7. **Keep secrets.** Do not disclose sensitive, proprietary, confidential, or financial information about the Company, other than what is publicly available in our SEC filings and corporate press releases. This includes revenues, profits, forecasts, and other financial information related to specific authors, brands, products, product lines, customers, operating units, etc. Again, if in doubt, check with the BOC before posting this type of information.
8. **Respect copyrights.** For your protection, do not post any material that is copyrighted unless (a) you are the copyright owner, (b) you have written permission of the copyright owner to post the copyrighted material on your blog, or (c) you are sure that the use of any copyrighted material is permitted by the legal doctrine of "fair use." (Please note: this is your responsibility. The Company cannot provide you with legal advice regarding this.)
9. **Obey the law.** This goes without saying, but by way of reminder, do not post any material that is obscene, defamatory, profane, libelous, threatening, harassing, abusive, hateful, embarrassing to another person or entity, or violates the privacy rights of another. Also, do not post material that contains viruses, Trojan horses, worms, or any other computer code that is intended to damage, interfere with, or surreptitiously intercept or expropriate any system, data, or information.
10. **Remember the Handbook.** As a condition of your employment, you agreed to abide by the rules of the *Thomas Nelson Company Handbook*. This also applies to your blogging activities. We suggest you take time to review the section entitled, "Employee Responsibilities" (pp. 36–39).

If you do not abide by the above guidelines, we reserve the right to stop linking to your blog.